

MEET OUR 2026-2027 ADVISORY COUNCIL



JAMES BRISCOE, MBA

Award-winning speaker and public education finance leader



AARON BROWN

Filmmaker, Photographer, and Creative Director



KARA CROWLEY

Visual Artist, Arts Educator, and Curator



JORDAN CUTLER

Marketing Strategist and Entrepreneur



DANNY DAVIS

Chef, Sommelier, and Restaurateur



**DR. CASHUNA
HUDDLESTON**

Licensed Clinical Psychologist



ARMAND KINCAIDE

Business Leader, Creative Director, and Community Advocate



BRIANA LEANDRE

Visual Artist, Engineer, and Entrepreneur



GEORGE ONAMI

Financial Educator, Advocate, and Advisor



DR. GHENI PLATENBURG

Award-winning Journalist, Professor, and Media Strategist



KEVIN RAWLS

Concert/Event Photographer and Entrepreneur



MAURICE J. SAPP

Operations & Marketing Strategist, Entrepreneur

A MESSAGE FROM OUR FOUNDER

Black Houston Creatives Network (BHCN) is more than a collective. We are an emerging membership-based professional association designed to strengthen the visibility, access, and professional outcomes of our members.

This work is guided by our signature CREATIVES Framework — Community, Resources, Economic Opportunities, Access, Technology, Impact, Visibility, Education, and Sustainability. Together, these pillars help us focus our efforts on what creatives need most: meaningful relationships, practical resources, greater visibility, economic opportunity, and long-term sustainability.

Building this kind of institution requires more than vision, though. It calls for strategic relationships, thoughtful stewardship, and leaders who understand the responsibility of shaping something meant to last.

BHCN's Advisory Council serves as the trusted leadership body helping to strengthen and advance this vision. The Council is an appointed group of distinguished Houston-based leaders who are invested in the long-term growth and impact of the network. Their guidance helps inform our direction, expand our reach, and support the development of real outcomes for our members.

I'm grateful for the Council's service to BHCN and to the broader Houston creative community. We encourage our members, partners, and community to introduce yourself to the Council, propose ideas, and stay connected as we continue building this work together.

A handwritten signature in white ink that reads "Denise N. Upshaw". The script is fluid and cursive, with a large, stylized 'D' and 'U'.

Denise N. Upshaw, MPA
Founder & CEO
Black Houston Creatives Network

JAMES BRISCO, MBA, RTSBA

James Briscoe, MBA, RTSBA, is a nationally recognized speaker and public education finance and procurement leader with extensive experience in K-12 financial management, procurement, operations, and executive leadership. He is the creator of the N.E.R.D.™ Best Value Framework, a practical approach designed to strengthen strategic purchasing, compliance, and best-value decision-making in public education.

A 2026 TASBO RISE Award recipient, James is also a Texas State Board of Education Registered Provider and founder of Briscoe Consulting Group. His work centers on transforming complex financial and procurement requirements into practical strategies that strengthen organizational performance, accountability, and stewardship of public resources.



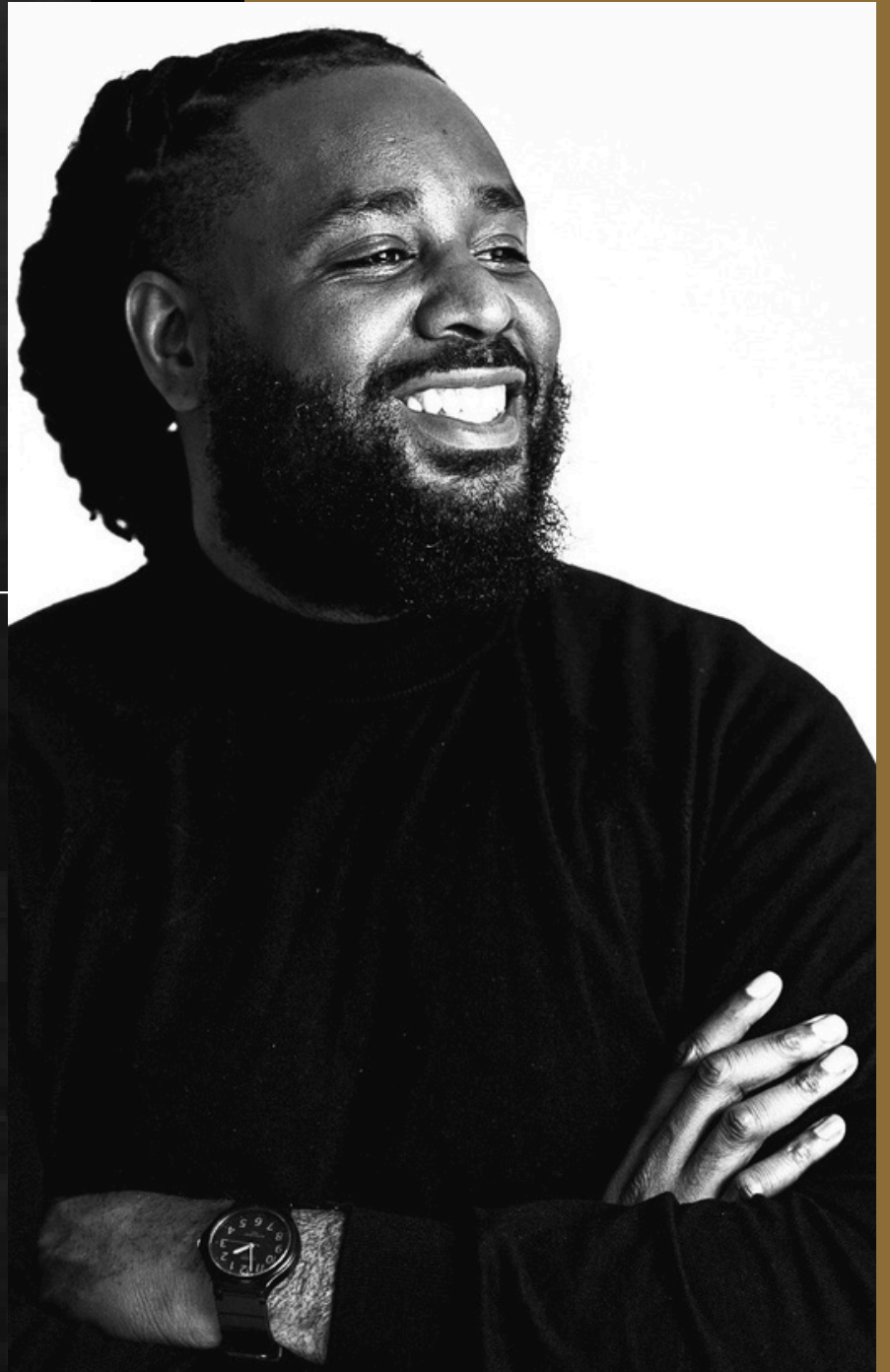
@james.brisco.mba

AARON BROWN

Aaron "A. Boogie" Brown of Th3rd Eye Studios is a visual artist from Houston, TX by way of Utica, NY. His background is in audio engineering where he began developing his skills as a teen, and eventually opened his first professional recording studio in 2007, where he had the pleasure of working with numerous local artists across different genres of music.

He transitioned into videography in 2017 while collaborating with his partners on a documentary entitled Hurricane Harvey: The Black Experience. Soon after the trifecta formed the media production company known as Th3rd Eye Studios. Th3rd Eye Studios specializes in brand-specific visual content creation, providing media teams for festivals and large events and wedding cinematography.

Aaron currently holds degrees from San Jacinto College and the University of Houston. His art is characterized by his signature moody portraits and his ability to capture candid moments used to create compelling visuals.



@th3rdeyestudios

KARA CROWLEY

Kara Crowley is a New Orleans Native, Houston-based visual artist, arts educator, and emerging curator whose work centers on storytelling through portraiture. Working primarily with acrylic and watercolor on wood, she incorporates pyrography (wood burning) and layered materials (oil pastels or molding paste) to create textured surfaces that reflect both visual and emotional depth.

Crowley's work highlights the cultural richness and lived experiences of Black communities in the Gulf South. Through portraiture, she centers individuals whose stories often exist outside of traditional historical narratives, bringing visibility to everyday people and the communities that shape them.

Raised in New Orleans, Crowley draws inspiration from the city's deep cultural traditions, resilience, and intergenerational knowledge. Her practice reflects a commitment to honoring heritage while creating space for dialogue about identity, memory, and belonging.

Alongside her studio practice, Crowley has worked in art education and now moves more deeply into community collaboration, curation, and arts leadership, while also using her work as a vessel for storytelling, cultural memory, and collective empowerment.



@artbykaramariee

JORDAN CUTLER

Jordan Cutler is a marketing strategist and community builder connecting economic development, tourism, and creative entrepreneurship.

As Senior Marketing Manager for Visit Sugar Land, and with nearly a decade of experience including work with Downtown Houston, Discover South Carolina, and South Carolina State Parks, she leads high-impact, story-driven campaigns rooted in strategy.

A proud graduate of Claflin University, South Carolina's first HBCU, Jordan is also the founder of Creative Cor-preneur and believes deeply in prioritizing mental health and aligning purpose, creativity, and impact.



@thejordanaalexandria

DANNY DAVIS

It all started with a Lunchable. I was six years old when my best friend Derrick brought the latest snack craze to school for lunch. My Dad's response was, "lunch a who?" My Granddad knew what it was and said, "That ain't nothing but a charcuterie board." The next day, Grandpa Lawrence packed my lunch with Jamon Serrano, water crackers, manchego cheese, and muscat grape juice. That moment began a 35 year love affair with Vitis Vinifera.

I was exposed to Chablis at family gatherings and began reading up on a career in the wine industry. After reading "Windows on the World" by Kevin Zraly, I set a personal goal of visiting all ten major wine regions before I turned 25, which I accomplished 3 months shy of my 25th birthday. My first solo trip to wine country was at 17, and that journey inspired me to sit for my Level 1 sommelier.

Over the next decade, I used travel to deepen my knowledge of grape varietals, terroir, stemware, and food pairings. I also realized early on that I was usually the only person of color at the table, so I began teaching wine boot camps and sharing wine education at dinner parties, bringing what I learned back to black and brown communities. I live by the mantra, "Each one, teach one, Drink son!"



@umaycallmesir

DR. CASHUNA HUDDLESTON

Dr. Cashuna Huddleston is a licensed psychologist, professor, and entrepreneur committed to creating spaces that honor healing, authenticity, and personal transformation.

As the founder of New Way Psychological Services, she blends clinical excellence with culturally grounded care to support individuals, families, and emerging clinicians. Her work is rooted in empowerment, intersectionality, and the belief that people can rebuild their lives with clarity, courage, and compassion. In both academic and clinical settings,

Dr. Huddleston is known for her creativity, leadership, and ability to translate complex psychological concepts into real-world growth. She is passionate about helping others step into their purpose, protect their well-being, and build sustainable lives that reflect their deepest values.



@iam_dr.shunh

ARMAND KINCADE

Armand Kincade is a faith-driven entrepreneur, creative leader, and cultural storyteller whose work sits at the intersection of business, media, and community. As Founder and Creative Director of Let's Argue About It!, he creates space for engaging dialogue and fresh perspectives on culture, relationships, everyday life, and the issues shaping our communities.

Beyond media, Armand is the Founder and CEO of Kincade Delivery Solutions LLC, where he leads operations in logistics and last-mile delivery. He is also a proud member of CoolxDad KXN. A devoted father and fiancé, Armand is guided by a strong sense of faith, responsibility, and service, bringing intention to how he builds, leads, and connects with others.



@calieatsgreedy

BRIANA LEANDRE

Briana Leandre is a visual artist, engineer, and creative entrepreneur whose work bridges art, storytelling, and community engagement.

With a background in energy operations and program management, she brings a structured, systems-driven approach to her creative practice, producing original works, live paintings, and immersive art activations that center around culture, faith, and personal growth.

As the founder of ArtbyBML, Briana creates artwork that explores identity, spirituality, and transformation, while also leading community-centered experiences such as paint-and-sip events and collaborative art installations.

Passionate about helping others reconnect with their creativity, she uses her platform to inspire confidence, purpose, and authentic self-expression through art.



@artbybml

GEORGE ONAMI

George Onami is a financial professional, educator, and business leader with more than 20 years of experience helping individuals, families, and business owners build, protect, and preserve wealth. Before entering financial services, he spent more than a decade in information technology, a background that continues to shape his analytical and solutions-oriented approach.

Today, George works with clients in retirement planning, investment strategies, life insurance, wealth accumulation, asset protection, and business succession. He also supports business owners with strategies such as key-person protection and executive benefits while placing a strong emphasis on financial education and informed decision-making.

Originally from Kenya and now based in Houston, George brings a global perspective and a strong commitment to family, community, and financial empowerment. Through education, mentorship, and leadership, his mission is to equip people with the knowledge and confidence to build stronger financial futures and lasting legacies.



DR. GHENI PLATENBURG

Gheni Platenburg is an award-winning journalist, university professor and media strategist passionate about helping people tell impactful and authentic stories.

A former full-time reporter with bylines in The Washington Post, The Lily, The Victoria Advocate and YES! Magazine, she now works to cultivate the next generation of journalists, conducts research on the intersection of Black identity and media and leads workshops across the country.

Through her small business, Pen & Perspectives Consulting, she provides strategic communication support and coaching for individuals and organizations. She also creates lifestyle content for Black millennial women, blending storytelling with culture, home and everyday joy.



@g_platenburg

KEVIN RAWLS

Kevin Rawls is a God-centered, Houston-based, live music and event photographer! He is a proud alum of Texas State University where he earned his B.A. in Public Relations, and is also a member of Kappa Alpha Psi Fraternity, Inc.

Kevin enjoys photographing everything from engagements to graduations to portraits, but his joy is rooted in concert photography. What he loves most about taking photos is that when done right, you can capture the essence and energy in one still frame that encapsulates an entire moment. One photo can invoke so much emotion, and that's his goal every time he picks up a camera.

A natural people person, Kevin takes pride in networking and bridging the gap between individuals from all walks of life in order to cultivate lasting relationships.



@killakev8 / @kandidsxkev

MAURICE J. SAPP

Maurice J. Sapp is a dynamic operations and marketing leader based in Houston, Texas, currently serving as General Manager of Agora Haus, a private members-only social club where culture meets class.

With a background spanning photography, brand development, event production, and business operations, he has led initiatives ranging from large-scale COVID-19 testing operations across California to high-impact experiential programming in hospitality and nightlife. Maurice specializes in building communities, driving membership growth, and creating elevated experiences that blend culture, connection, and exclusivity.

His expertise includes strategic partnerships, marketing campaigns, and operational systems that scale both revenue and engagement. Passionate about innovation and culture, he continues to develop platforms and experiences that bring influential people together in meaningful ways.



@mr_gl

For more information, please contact us:

hello@blackcreativesnetwork.com

@blackhoustoncreativesnetwork on Instagram